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ABSTRACT

Some welfare experts and policymakers advocate providing education and training to prepare welfare recipients for jobs that will eventually help them leave poverty (the "work first" approach), whereas others advocate placing welfare recipients in jobs immediately whenever possible. Although the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 shifted the emphasis of federal policy toward the "work first" approach, it has left states some flexibility in determining how and when to use education and training in their welfare-to-work programs. When deciding how to use this flexibility, states may want to consider the findings of a research project on the relationship between education and the success of welfare-to-work programs. The evidence for the usefulness of occupational training is mixed, as is the evidence for adult education-focused programs. Work-based programs have generally shown better results for welfare recipients than have programs stressing either job search or classroom education and training alone. The research has also identified 25 programs that have drawn attention for their good results or incorporation of features believed to be effective. They include programs training welfare recipients for nontraditional jobs, literacy programs, and vocational training programs for target groups, such as people with limited English skills. (Contains 47 references) (MN)

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Education and Training Under Welfare Reform

by Marie Cohen, Welfare Information Network

Background

The role of education and training in welfare reform is controversial. Some welfare experts and policymakers advocate providing education and training to prepare welfare recipients for jobs that will eventually help them leave poverty—often called the human capital approach. Others advocate placing welfare recipients immediately in jobs whenever possible, even if these jobs pay wages below the poverty level. These "Work First" proponents argue that welfare recipients learn more from an actual job than from any educational program.

Policies toward education and training for welfare recipients have changed over time. The Family Support Act of 1988 encouraged the provision of these services. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) shifted the emphasis of federal policy toward a "Work First" approach. It encourages quick job placement by requiring increasing proportions of state welfare caseloads to be participating in work activities for increasing number of hours and limiting the extent to which education and training can count as such work activities.

"Vocational educational training" may count as a work activity for only 12 months for any individual. Moreover, no more than 30% of those TANF recipients that a state counts as engaged in work activities can be in vocational educational training. In the year 2000 and thereafter, teenage parents in high school, GED programs, or education directly related to employment will be included in the cap.

"Job skills training," "education directly related to employment," and high school or GED completion may not count toward the first 20 hours per week of participation required by PRWORA for single parents (unless the participant is a teenage parent). This means these activities cannot count toward federal participation rate requirements at all until 1999, when they can count toward the last five hours of participation. In 2000 and thereafter, these activities can count for 10 of the required 30 hours of participation. For adults in two-parent families, these activities can count toward only five of the required 35 or 55 hours of participation.

One exception to the Work First approach is that teenage parents receiving TANF assistance must be in education aimed at the attainment of a high school degree or equivalent, or in an alternative education or training plan approved by the state. Programs for in-school youth are not discussed in this Issue Note.

On-the-job training is considered work under PRWORA. It will be addressed in a subsequent Issue Note along with work experience and subsidized employment.

The welfare to work grants, created by Congress in 1997 to help states fund efforts to place the least employable welfare recipients in jobs, are not available for stand-alone education and training activities except when provided as a post-employment service.

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Policy Issues

PRWORA gives states some flexibility in determining how and when to use education and training in their welfare to work programs. In deciding how to use this flexibility, states may want to consider the following questions.

What is the purpose of education and training and who should receive them? Education and training can be seen as an option of last resort for people who cannot find a job without further preparation. Alternatively, they can be seen as a way to increase earnings capacity, and thus be provided to employable welfare recipients so they can find higher paying or more stable jobs. They can also improve the earnings capacity of recipients who are already employed. The selection of participants and the nature and duration of training will vary depending on which objective is selected. A state that wants to involve more people in education and training can further this goal by adopting broad definitions of PRWORA activity categories such as job readiness and community service, combining education and training with work activities not limited by PRWORA, or creating separate state programs to fund education and training.

When should education and training be provided: before or during employment? Some policymakers and analysts believe that for reasons of equity, cost-saving, or lack of strong research results proving their benefits, education and training should be provided only to people who are already working. Others argue that education or training should be a prerequisite for people who could otherwise find only low-wage, dead-end jobs that might soon result in a return to welfare. States must decide whether and to what extent to use their resources on education and training as stand-alone, pre-employment services and to what extent to reserve them for those already working.

What education and training services should be provided? Adult basic education (ABE), literacy classes, English as a Second Language, and post-secondary education are not specifically included as allowable activities under TANF, but states can elect to include them in definitions of allowable categories such as education directly related to employment, vocational educational training, or community service. The most controversial category is post-secondary education, which is being strongly discouraged in some states unless the recipient is spending the required number of hours working. States must decide whether they believe this is a worthwhile activity because of the possible increase in earnings potential among recipients or whether it is an option that can only be pursued after work requirements are met.

How can welfare recipients be assisted and motivated to obtain needed education? Many welfare recipients with low basic skills have failed in school and are not interested in entering a classroom again, especially for basic skills instruction. Moreover, many may have learning disabilities that impaired their progress in school and may also prevent their benefiting from traditional education or training programs. Welfare recipients in basic education have typically had poor attendance and high dropout rates. To make education more attractive or effective, states and localities can support programs that integrate education with work and training. They can also support programs that incorporate instructional strategies that have been identified as effective for people with learning disabilities. (See Nightingale, *et al*, 1991, for a discussion of such strategies.) However, such programs may be more costly than the strategies used for the general population.

How long will services last? PRWORA limits "vocational educational training" to one year and places a time limit on welfare receipt. Since the other educational categories do not count for the first 20 hours of work activities, states must choose whether to allow welfare recipients to engage in longer educational programs and not count toward participation rates or to limit their time in education. State welfare agencies can work with community colleges to encourage them to develop shorter-term training programs and to compress existing programs into shorter time-frames by having classes meet more hours per week.

How can education and training be combined with work to meet the TANF work requirements? States can support programs that package work and training together. Such an approach will increase opportunities to meet work requirements, possibly increase the effectiveness of education, and may

increase earnings potential more than pure work. However, this approach may require more hours and thus entail higher child care costs than education or work by themselves.

Who provides and coordinates education and training services? State and local agencies can choose between a wide variety of education and training providers, including nonprofit community organizations, for-profit schools, school districts and community colleges. The local welfare agency can coordinate these services or it can use a local workforce development agency, private industry council, or community college to perform this function.

How can states and counties ensure the quality of education and training services provided under contract to TANF recipients? Past welfare-to-work programs have been criticized for the poor quality or irrelevance of some education and training services. Many states and counties are using performance-based contracting to promote quality service. For information on this issue, see WIN's publication, **Contracting for Performance in Welfare Reform**. However, such arrangements do not ensure that programs will be effective in improving clients' employment and earnings, as shown by the poor results of classroom training for welfare recipients under the Job Training Partnership Act.

What resources will be used to provide education and training to recipients and former recipients? TANF does not limit the amount of money states can spend on education and training, only the extent to which these activities count as work. Thus, states can spend as high a proportion of TANF funds on these activities as they want, as long as the work requirements are being met. States can also create separate state programs to support education for welfare recipients, thus removing these people from the participation rate calculations. This money can still count as state maintenance of effort funding under TANF. However, the draft TANF regulations indicate that HHS will not forgive a penalty based on reasonable cause if it decides the state is using the separate state program to avoid the TANF work participation rates. If this provision remains unchanged, states may need to be careful about how state-only funds are used. States also have access to a wide variety of other funds—such as job training and adult education funds—for education and training. They may want to consider making welfare recipients a priority for these programs.

Research Findings

A large proportion of welfare recipients have very low educational and skill levels. A study of a nationally representative sample of single welfare mothers found that 64% lacked high school diplomas (Spalter-Roth *et al.*, 1995). Almost two-thirds of welfare recipients' test scores on the Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT) fall in the bottom quartile; 31% fall in the bottom decile. Researchers have estimated that between 25% and 40% of welfare recipients have learning disabilities. (See Nightingale, 1991, and contact Glenn Young at the National Institute for Literacy, (202) 632-1500.) Studies show that people with more education and training have higher earnings and a greater likelihood of being employed. (See Holzer, 1996; Institute for Women's Policy Research, 1997). Moreover, studies suggest that in many areas there are not enough low-skilled jobs for the welfare recipients who are qualified only for such work. (See Kleppner and Theodore, 1997; Cochrane, Horst and Koropeckyj, 1997). Even when jobs require minimal skills, employers may be unwilling to hire some people who fail to meet certain minimum standards (Holzer, 1996; Newman and Lemon, 1995).

Despite the clear relationship between skill level and compensation, the research on education and training programs for welfare recipients leaves many more questions than answers. In part, this is due to the small number of evaluations and limitations in their designs. For example, education and training were usually only components of the programs studied, which often included job search assistance, work experience, and other services. Results are usually not provided for specific services. Second, long term data on participant outcomes several years after the program ends are available for only a few studies. (See Bloom, 1997; Pauly, 1995.)

In general, the research suggests that welfare-to-work models that include education and training as part of a spectrum of activities can produce more positive and longer-lasting impacts on earnings than programs that provide only job search assistance. However, education or training oriented programs have not consistently produced more positive results than job-search oriented programs, nor have they

produced better impacts on welfare receipt or welfare spending, perhaps in some cases because they help people who would have left welfare anyway attain higher-wage jobs than they would have gotten. (See Bloom, 1997, and Strawn, 1998, for a further discussion of the literature).

The evidence for the usefulness of occupational training specifically is mixed. The Center for Employment Training (CET) in San Jose, California, had strong impacts on welfare recipients' employment and earnings compared to those of a control group; however, the impacts lasted as long as five years only for those who started out with 12 or more years of education (see Zambrowski and Gordon, 1993). One factor that distinguishes CET is that basic education and work experience are integrated with training. Comparative evidence from welfare-to-work programs also suggests some benefits from training (see Bloom, 1997). There are several studies, not focused on welfare recipients, that document positive effects of community college education on employment and earnings for those who start out with basic math, literacy and study skills (see Schweber, 1997). However, the national survey of the Job Training Partnership Act (see Orr *et al.*, 1996) found no increase in earnings for welfare recipients receiving classroom training.

Studies of adult education-focused programs also have mixed results. A synthesis of 18 evaluations of programs providing adult education to people on AFDC (Pauly, 1995) found that the programs increased participation in education and GED or high school degree attainment, but did not usually improve achievement on standardized tests. Most of the programs produced statistically significant impacts on employment. Evidence from California's GAIN program suggests some impact for adult education: in the five counties studied, the employment impacts were concentrated among people who receive GEDs through the program. However, there was no consistent pattern linking earnings and welfare impacts with the receipt of adult education.

One reason that many welfare recipients seem to benefit little from adult education may be that while many adult education programs are aimed at GED completion, there is evidence questioning the utility of a GED in the labor market, except as a means for getting into further education or training (see Cameron and Heckman, 1993; Murnane *et al.*, 1995; U.S. Department of Labor, 1995). Another reason may be that many welfare recipients have failed in school and are unenthusiastic about returning to the classroom. Moreover, there appears to be a scarcity of educational services appropriate for those with learning disabilities or limited English proficiency. Perhaps as a result of these factors, attendance by AFDC recipients in adult education programs has been poor and many fail to complete the programs (see Pauly, 1995).

In general, work-based programs have shown better results for welfare recipients than programs stressing either job search or classroom education and training alone. Strong positive effects on welfare recipients' earnings have been found for on-the-job training under the Job Training Partnership Act, and two demonstrations conducted in the 1980s: the Supported Work Demonstration and the Homemaker-Home Health Aide Demonstration. These results suggest that education and training might best be provided in conjunction with actual work experience or employment, rather than before the welfare recipient is placed on the job. This is consistent with the current support for lifelong learning, which encourages all workers to upgrade their skills throughout their working lives.

Innovative Practices

Below is a small sample of programs that have drawn attention because of good results or because they incorporate features that are believed to be effective. Many of these programs integrate education with training, combine education and training with work experience, involve employers, or train women for nontraditional careers. Also included are some programs that accept applicants regardless of skill level. Strawn, 1998, and Finney, 1997, provide more details about some of these programs and descriptions of others. Contact WIN for information about other noteworthy programs.

The Center for Employment Training (CET), which is known for its strong evaluation results, is distinguished by the teaching of all math and literacy skills within the context of a specific job, strong linkages with employers, short-term training, and a policy of admitting all applicants. There are 26 centers directly administered by CET and 12 sites using the CET model but run by other agencies.

Contact: Max Martinez, (408) 287-7924, and David Lah, U.S. Department of Labor, (202) 219-5782, ext. 105. See also the CET web site at http://www.best.com/~cfet/main.htm.

In the nine-month HOST program in Columbus, Ohio, welfare recipients spend two weeks in the classroom learning general job readiness skills, and then begin on-the-job training with their prospective employers while returning to the classroom at least once per week. The program is a partnership between the state and local education and welfare agencies and a consortium of employers in the hotel and motel industry. Contact: Thomas Applegate, Associate Director of Vocational Education, State of Ohio, (614) 466-3430.

The Cooperative Health Care Network is a federation of three employee-owned cooperative businesses that provide up to five weeks of classroom training, followed by placement as a probationary home health aide. After up to three months of on-the-job training and ongoing support from an on-site counselor, participants become full-fledged employees. Contact: Peggy Powell, Executive Administrator, Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute, (718) 993-7104.

Participants in the IndEx program in Tulsa spend four hours of each day in education and four hours working on the shop floor, primarily in light manufacturing, for a total of about 40 hours per week. IndEx has no minimum education requirements for participants. IndEx has recently added a three-week classroom training program in electronics or telecommunications, followed by probationary employment, for participants who have obtained their GEDs. Contact: Tim Westberry, General Manager, IndEx, (918) 587-5307, or see http://www.welfareinfo.org/ppindex.htm.

New York City's Wildcat Service Corporation, a pioneer in employment and training for welfare recipients, provides a number of programs that combine work experience in government agencies with training. Wildcat also works with private sector organizations to provide work opportunities for welfare recipients. Those with eighth grade or higher reading levels can attend a 16-week training program designed to prepare them for work at Salomon Smith Barney. Successful graduates can interview for a paid work assignment for up to 16 weeks at Salomon Smith Barney. Contact: Jeffrey Jablow, Senior Vice President, Wildcat Service Corporation, (212) 219-9700, ext. 5151.

Growing Experience, created by Los Angeles County's Community Development Commission in conjunction with the University of California's Cooperative Extension Service, prepares public housing residents for jobs in the nursery, landscaping, and turf industries. It includes six months of classroom training combined with hands-on experience for a total of 40 hours per week, resulting in a certificate in horticulture, followed by a six month internship. Participants are paid $7 per hour for the entire year. There are no educational requirements for admission, and participants have an average of five years on welfare. The program was a semifinalist for the Innovation in American Governments Awards program. Contact: Thomas White, (213) 890-7124, or twhite@lacdc.org.

Other programs training welfare recipients for nontraditional jobs include:

> Chicago's Greater West Town Community Development Project provides training in woodworking and shipping and receiving. Contact: Willy Molfulleda, (312) 563-9570 or Michael Redmond, (312) 563-9044.
>
> The Resident Apprenticeship Demonstration Program offers welfare recipients in 21 cities the opportunity to learn life skills and enter a union apprenticeship program in the construction industry. Contact Ed Gorman III, President, The America Works Partnership, (202) 639-8811.
>
> NEW Choices for Women, operated by Goodwill in Atlanta, offers 12 weeks of pre-apprenticeship training that prepares women for careers in carpentry, plumbing, electrical work, painting, and other construction-related fields. Contact Cindy Henning, Program Manager, (404) 377-0441.

National Institute for Literacy Award-Winners

The National Institute for Literacy assembled a panel of specialists in adult education, welfare, and employment and training to choose a group of programs that are effectively using basic skills instruction in assisting welfare recipients to move into the workforce. The 84 applicants were given numerical scores based on the extent to which they serve the more disadvantaged recipients, the type and quality of services offered, program outcomes, good record keeping, replicability, and private sector involvement. The eight programs that scored highest are listed below in order of scores.

The Education for Gainful Employment (EDGE) program, operated by the New York State Education Department, combines unpaid work experience with basic education services and sometimes job skills training. The program is designed to allow participants to meet TANF requirements by combining work and study. Contact: Robert Purga, New York State Education Department, (518) 474-8920.

The IMPACT Basic Education Program of the Hammond Indiana School District provides basic educational skills, life skills, and job readiness education. Education is provided in an occupational context, and most participants combine classroom learning with work experience. The program was rated highly for accepting all applicants regardless of educational level, providing a comprehensive assessment process, a work-oriented curriculum, a sophisticated goal-setting component, and a volunteer service component. Contact: Dr. Stephen E. Watson, Director of Adult and Extended Services/At Risk, Hammond City School District, (219) 933-2419.

The Cleveland Public Schools Adult Education Program uses "client advocates" who meet regularly with participants and help them deal with support service needs. The program also includes an up-front comprehensive vocational assessment, job developers, a volunteer work component, a hands-on program to train teachers in work-based approaches, and job coaches for the newly employed. Contact: Judith Crocker, Supervisor, Adult and Continuing Education, (216) 631-2885.

The Brooklyn College Child Care Provider Program, a local EDGE program, provides basic and job skills training and work experience in a child care center in alternating weeks for a total of five months. Contact: Cheryl Harewood, (718) 722-3460/3462.

The Chicago Commons Employment Training Center provides a six-month series of courses for students who test at or below the sixth grade level. Teaching techniques are designed to accommodate learning disabilities and different learning styles. Because participants reading at very low levels may not have the time to gain a GED, the curriculum teaches students the skills they need to enter and succeed in one of several vocational training programs that staff identified as effective and accessible to people without high school diplomas or GEDs. Contact: Jenny Wittner, Director, Chicago Commons Employment and Training Center, (773) 772-0900.

CAP Services' Family Literacy Program, operated by a community action agency in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, develops a self-sufficiency plan for each family that can include education, training, work experience, and other services. The program was chosen as exemplary because of its outstanding placement rates and its success in helping newly employed participants continue their education and qualify for pay increases. Contact: Mary Patoka, Director of Family Services, (715) 345-5208.

The Canton City Schools Even Start Program provides 20 hours of work experience and 10 hours of academic and life skills education weekly for parents at their children's schools. Participants have the opportunity to do job shadowing, meet with a mentor, and receive a comprehensive vocational assessment. The program was designed to meet the TANF work requirements. Contact: Jane Meyer, Coordinator of Adult Basic Literacy Education, Canton City Schools, (330) 588-2148.

The South Bay GAIN Employability Center, operated by the Sweetwater Union High School District in San Diego, offers basic education in a vocational context, as well as training in business office technologies, health occupations, and industrial technologies. Contact: Melinda Templeton, Program Manager, (619) 585-6231.

Youth Programs

Two programs targeted at youth, including welfare recipients, have drawn positive attention for their models that integrate work experience with education.

Youth Corps combines work on environmental or human service projects with basic education and life skills training for about 26,000 adults ages 18 to 25 annually for nine to 12 months. An Abt Associates evaluation found that participants' employment and earnings were substantially increased. Contact: Matt Calderone, National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, (202) 737-6272.

Over 3,000 young people in 35 states participate in YouthBuild, typically spending half their time building or renovating affordable housing and half of their time in educational activities in alternative schools. Contact: (617) 623-9900.

Community Colleges

Many community colleges are tailoring education and training programs to welfare recipients.

Portland Community College created an Employability Track as part of its welfare-to-work program, Steps to Success, to serve welfare recipients who are learning disabled or reading below the fourth-grade level. The program includes eight weeks of classes in phonics, experiential learning, life skills, and career assessment. Most of the participants then go on to Adult Basic Education, often combined with work experience. Contact: Terri Greenfield, Program Director, Employment and Training Services, Portland Community College, (503) 281-0495, ext. 266.

El Paso Community College has developed vocational training programs for adults with limited English skills and educational backgrounds. No one is excluded for low skills. These programs combine English as a Second Language when necessary, basic skills education, and GED classes with vocational training. Contact: Kathleen Bombach, Director, Literacy and Workforce Development Center, (915) 831-4432.

In response to welfare time limits, the Department of Social Services in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, worked with community college staff to compress existing occupational certificate programs into shorter time-frames by having them meet more hours per week. Contact Diane Hausinger, Deputy Director, Fond du Lac County Department of Social Services, (920) 929-3433.

Staff of Florida's Family Transition Program in Escambia County polled employers to determine the skills they needed and worked with community colleges to set up courses to train welfare recipients in those skills. Contact: Shirley Jacques, Operations Program Administrator, Department of Children and Families, (850) 494-5918.

The California legislature allocated $65 million to help community colleges to expand and redesign their programs to meet the new requirements of welfare reform. The colleges plan to spend part of this money to develop shorter term training programs. At least 28% of the new funds will provide work/study employment for TANF recipients in order to enable students to meet work requirements while going to school, to provide them with marketable work experience, and to give them additional income. Contact Connie Anderson, Coordinator, GAIN/Welfare Reform Program, California Community Colleges, (916) 324-2353, or canderso@cc1.ccco.edu.

State Policies on Higher Education

There is anecdotal evidence that some state and local welfare agencies are requiring recipients to leave education and training programs in order to participate in job search or "work off" their benefits in unpaid positions. Drastic declines have been reported in college enrollment by welfare recipients in Baltimore, New York City, Milwaukee and Massachusetts (see Pierre, 1997; Schmidt, 1998). However, there is little systematic information on state policies toward education and training. In a survey conducted in May-August 1997, the Center for Law and Social Policy found that 24 states allow at least some TANF recipients to participate in postsecondary education. However, in some of these states, higher education was allowed only for those who had already begun their studies before they came under

TANF. There are efforts underway to catalog state policies toward education and training. Contact WIN for further information.

Maine created a separate program to enable students to receive aid without being subject to TANF participation requirements. Students meeting certain requirements receive benefits equivalent to the cash aid, medical coverage, transitional benefits, and other services they would have received had they become TANF recipients. Contact: Steve Telow, ASPIRE/JOBS Coordinator, (207) 287-3309.

The Wyoming legislature authorized a new student aid program, funded through state maintenance-of-effort funds, that is available instead of a TANF grant to recipients who have completed an employment assessment, meet income and resources eligibility requirements, and are full-time students in an approved program. Contact: Delores Shelton, Economic Assistance Program Consultant, (307) 777-6786.

For More Information . . .

RESOURCE CONTACTS

American Association of Community Colleges. Contact Ashley Giglio about federal policy, Jim McKenney about local programs, (202) 728-0200, or see http://www.aacc.nche.edu.

Center for Law and Social Policy. Contact Julie Strawn, (202) 328-5140.

Center for Women Policy Studies. Contact Tanya Chin, (202) 872-1770.

Institute for Women's Policy Research. Contact Johanna Finney, (202) 785-5100.

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. Contact Dan Bloom, (212) 532-3200.

Mathematica Policy Research Inc. Contact LaDonna Pavetti, (202) 484-4697.

National Governors' Association. Contact Susan Golonka or Rebecca Brown, (202) 624-5300.

National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. Contact Elson Nash, (202) 293-7070 or see

National Coalition for the Education of Welfare Recipients (composed of higher education leaders and institutions). Contact Marilyn Gittell, (212) 642-2974.

National Institute for Literacy. For general questions, contact Alice Johnson, (202) 632-1516. For questions about learning disabilities, contact Glenn Young, (202) 632-1500, or gyoung@nifl.gov.

U.S. Department of Education. Contact Jon Weintraub, Director, Office of Policy Analysis, (202) 205-5410; Sarah Newcomb, Division of Adult and Vocational Education, (202) 205-9872.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Policy contact: Mack Storrs, Director, Division of Self-Sufficiency, Office of Family Assistance, (202) 401-9289. Research contact: Audrey Mirsky-Ashby, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, (202) 690-7148.

U.S. Department of Labor. For general questions, contact Charles Atkins, Deputy Administrator, Office of Job Training Programs, (202) 219-6236; for data questions, Ron Putz, Chief, Analysis and Technical Assistance Division, (202) 219-5305.

Urban Institute. Contact Demetra Nightingale, (202) 857-8570.

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